Bhakti: A Vedantic principle

Subject Matter:

A common misconception prevalent for the *Bhakti* as not being mentioned in the Vedic scriptures and being only mentioned in Puranic scriptures is merely due to the lack of insight into the Vedic Sanatan Scriptures. Although there are several references available in Vedas, Smruti, Puranas, Agamas - a specific reference in Chhandogya Upanishad (7-23-1 – 7.25.2) is very intriguing and mind-boggling. Rest of the article will focus on scrutinizing these Shrutis and comprehending the demonstration of 'Bhakti' by them.

Bhaktimartanda of Sri Gopeshvarji

The discussion in this article is based on the excellent comprehensive treatise on bhakti named "*Bhakti Martanda*" by *Goswami Sri Gopeshvarji* (one of the direct descendants of *Sri Vallabhacharya*). *Sri Gopeshvarji* has elucidated on this particular subject by structuring the treatise into 4 major sections for *Bhakti*. The author deals with these subjects by providing a consistent, coherent and coordinated meaning of scriptural passages proving the end goal of entire scripture to be as *Bhakti* in a mode of debate by refuting various prior-views and presenting with the final concluding views of all the scriptural passages. In a way, Author seems to be following a Vedic, Ancient, splendid and hermeneutical methodology called as *Adhikarana*. An *Adhikarana* is defined as "विषयो विशयश्चैव पूर्वपक्षः तथा उत्तरम् संगतिस्च शास्त्रे अधिकरणं स्मृतं" which means it is a structured and a Well-defined Vedic hermeneutics process that includes 5 major components –

1. Subject Matter (विषय)
2. Doubt (संशय)
3. Prima Facie view and arguments (पूर्वपक्ष)
4. Proposed Doctrine and (सिद्धान्त पक्ष)
5. Synthesis and justification of the proposed doctrine - (संगति)

All the sections are dealt with by Sri Gopeshvarji in the style of Adhikarana as described above.

Below are the sections:

1. Pramana Prakarana (प्रमाण): Furnishes numerous scriptural passages describing the intention and sole purpose of all the scriptures as *Bhakti*.

2. Prameya Prakarana (प्रमेय): Focuses on the essential nature of Bhakti and provides distinguishing features characterizing the unique attributes of *Bhakti* as compared to Action (*Karma*), Understanding (*Gyan*), *Upasana*, *Yoga*, *Pooja*, and *Sharanagati*. Describes different types of *Bhakti* mentioned in various scriptures.

3. Sadhana Prakarana (साधन): Means of Achieving *Bhakti*. Author expounds the subject of whether *Bhakti* can be achieved by good deeds, various actions mentioned in scriptures, or is it totally independent to these factors? Who is eligible for it? Is Brahman the only subject of *Bhakti*?

4. Phala Prakarana (फल): The end effects of *Bhakti* or *Bhakti* as an outcome. Author describes 3 major outcomes of it – Total involvement into the Supreme Being (सर्वात्मभाव), Absolute Unity with the Supreme Being (सायुज्य), A Divine body in heavenly abodes of the Supreme Being (सेवोपयोगि देहो वैकुण्ठादिषु)

Bhakti in Upanishads

Trying to break the water-tight compartment between object and subject, outer and inner, form and formless, attributes and attribute less, cause and effect, conscious and matter – Upanishads takes the approach from Outermost to Innermost and from Innermost to Outermost establishing the relationship of Identity with that Supreme Being – Brahman (Exactly similar to Neti-Dhauti in Yoga).

Chhandogya Upanishad takes the similar approach and covers up the journey from Gross forms to Subtle, from Conscious to insentient and vice versa and finally ending the journey with the supreme bliss called *Bhuma* which is the basis of all forms, names and functions. *Chhandogya Upanishad (7-23-1 – 7.25.2)* describes about *Bhuma* which is also called *Bhuma Vidya* - the knowledge of Self-supported, self-sufficient, self-complete phenomena called as *Brahman*. Along with it has described the *Bhakti* of this *Bhuma*. The etymological meaning of the word *Bhuma* as per *Paniniya Sutra* (बहोर्लोपो भू च वहोः) is "Existence with Infinitude (abundance)" which essentially means the Supreme Being known as *Brahman* in Vedas.

Upanishad while defining the essential nature of Absolute Infinite Bliss:

यो वै भूमा तत्सुखं नाल्पे सुखमस्ति भूमैव सुखं भूमा त्वेव विजिज्ञासितव्य इति भूमानं भगवो विजिज्ञास इति

Bhuma is the absolute and infinite bliss. The finite things do not contain happiness.

Upanishad further goes on defining the *Bhuma* as -

यत्र नान्यत्पश्यति नान्यच्छृणोति नान्यद्विजानाति स भूमाSथ यत्र अन्यत्पश्यति अन्यत्छृनोति अन्यत्विजानाति तदल्पं यो वै भूमा तदमृतमथ यदल्पं तन्मर्त्यं...

Bhuma is the one by seeing which one doesn't see anything else, by listening to it one doesn't listen to anything else, by knowing which one doesn't need to know anything. Thus, *Bhuma* is the Totality and Infinitude

Further, In relation to the quest of how to achieve this *Bhuma*, Upanishad answers as below –

स भगवः कस्मिन्प्रतिष्ठितः इति स्वे महिम्ने

What is the locus of *Bhuma*? (How to achieve him?) He is located in his own greatness. As per the commentary of Sri Gopeshvarji, the meaning of the phrase '*his own greatness*' refers to the *Sarvatmabhava* state which is the end result of the *Bhakti* which is consistent with several scriptural references related to Bhakti being the only means in achieving the *Purshottama* or *Brahman*. Further, *Bhakti* is not achieved by any other means but the grace of *Brahman*. Having mentioned the grace as the only means of achieving *Brahman*, does not render other means mentioned in the scriptures as useless since other means are mere various manifestations of this grace as its primordial cause.

Now comes a very interesting subject of various states of *bhakti* as mentioned in the subject.

Upanishad continues describing the various states of *Bhakti* as per below -

- Tada-adesha: The literal meaning of 'Tad' in Sanskrit is '*THAT'*. Conceiving *Brahman* as different then self and realizing its Greatness. This type of reference to *Brahman* is known as '*tadadesha'*. This is same as saying 'THAT is Brahman'. This is referred by

  स एवाधस्तात्स उपरिष्टात्स पश्चात्स पुरस्तात्स दक्षिणतः स उत्तरतः

- Ahamkara-Adesha: The literal meaning of '*Aham'* is "Ego". Conceiving Brahman as Ego. This type of reference to Brahman is known as '*Ahamkara-adesha*' where the Ego is still retained to refer Brahman. This is referred by

  अहमेवाधस्तादहमुपरिष्टादहं पश्चादहं पुरस्तादहं दक्षिणतोऽहमुत्तरतोऽहमेवेदँ सर्वमिति

- Atma-Adesha: Conceiving Brahman as *Self*. This type of reference encompasses and integrates both the references of 'THAT' and 'I' and thus, this type of realization is an exalted and apex state of *Bhakti*. The Nature of Bhakti is all encompassing and all-integrating that leads to realization of the multidimensional and infinite totality by maintaining a fine balance between the greatness and the love towards that Ultimate reality. Bhakti provides that framework to let us love that Ultimate reality through the realization of substantial Identity

with it and at the same time let us realize its greatness. The identity between duality and non-duality, cause and effect, part and the whole, qualities and the qualified, substance and the substratum. This is referred by

अथात आत्मादेश एवात्मैवाधस्तादात्मोपरिष्टादात्मा पश्चादात्मा पुरस्तादात्मा दक्षिणत आत्मोत्तरत आत्मैवेद सर्वमिति

Summary:

The above can be very well understood with its respective references found in Srimad Bhagavatam.

Type of realization	**Reference in the Upanishad**	**Reference in Srimad Bhagavatam**			
तदादेश(Conceiving Brahman as HE)	स एवाधस्तात्स उपरिष्टात्स पश्चात्स पुरस्तात्स दक्षिणतः स उत्तरतः स एवेद९ सर्वमित्यथातोऽहङ्कारादेश एवाहमेवाधस्तादहमुपरिष्टादहं पश्चादहं पुरस्तादहं दक्षिणतोऽहमुत्तरतोऽहमेवेद९ सर्वमिति ॥ — VII-xxv-1,*chAndogya up*.	गायन्त्य उच्चैरमुमेव संहता विचिकियुरुन्मत्तक्वद्वनाद्वनं । प्रपच्छुराकाशवदन्तरं बहिर्भुतेषु सन्तंपुरुषं वनस्पतीन् ॥ (१०-२७-४)	माहात्म्यज्ञान (Greatness, Duality)	कर्म मार्ग	Object
अहन्कारादेश (Conceiving Brahman as I)	अहमेवाधस्तादहमुपरिष्टादहं पश्चादहं पुरस्तादहं दक्षिणतोऽहमुत्तरतोऽहमेवेद९ सर्वमिति ॥ — VII-xxv-1,*chAndogya up*.	कस्यान्श्चित स्वभुजं न्यस्य चलन्त्याहापरा ननु। कृष्णोऽहं पश्यत गतिं ललितामिति तन्मनाः॥ (१०-२७-१९)	ब्रह्मज्ञान (Non-Duality)	ज्ञानमार्ग	Subject
आत्मादेश Self-Reference (He and Me are integrated)	अथात आत्मादेश एवात्मैवाधस्तादात्मोपरिष्टादात्मा पश्चादात्मा पुरस्तादात्मा दक्षिणत आत्मोत्तरत आत्मैवेद सर्वमिति स वा एष एवं पश्यन्नेवं मन्वान एवं विजानन्नात्मरतिरात्मक्रीड आत्ममिथुन आत्मानन्दः स स्वराड्भवति तस्य सर्वेषु लोकेषु कामचारो भवति ॥ — VII-xxv-2, chAndogya up.	अपरानिमिषद्रग्भ्यां जुषाणा तन्मुखाम्भुजं। आपीतमपि नाSत्रुप्यत्सन्तस्तत्चरणम् यथा ॥ (१०-२९-७)	भक्तिज्ञान (Identity, Bhakti)	भक्तिमार्ग	Subject and Object are Integrated to Self.

References of Bhakti:

नायमात्मा च प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन यमैवेष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः तस्यैष आत्मा वृणुते तनुंस्वां इति (कठ. उप., मुण्डक उप.)

आत्मरतिरात्मक्रीड आत्ममिथुन आत्मानन्दः स स्वराड्भवति (छान्दोग्य. उप.)

रसं ह्येवायंलब्ध्वानन्दी भवति (तैत्त. उप.)

यो वेद निहितं गुहायां परमे व्योमन् सोश्नुते सर्वान् कामान् सह ब्रह्मणा विपश्चिता (तैत्त. उप.)

न वा अरे सर्वस्य कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति (बृ. आ. उप.)

Author:

Dhawal Patel (Student - Vallabha Vedanta)

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1. *Tatvarthdeepa Nibandha by Sri Vallabhacharya*
2. *Sri Subodhini by Sri Vallabhacharya*
3. *Brahmasutra Anubhasyam by Sri Vallabhacharya*
4. *Bhasya Prakash by Goswami Sri Purshottamji*
5. *Bhakti Martanda by Goswami Sri Gopeshvarji*
6. *Various Upanishads*
7. *Lectures on Brahmavada by Goswami Sri Shyam Manoharji (Kishangarh-Parla)*